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SUBJECT: DECEMBER 20 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: PRODUCT SAFETY, SIX-PARTY-TALKS, ROK ELECTION, BURMA, INDIA, DISPUTED ISLANDS

¶1. Key points at the December 20 MFA Press Briefing:

-- On U.S. Presidential candidate Barack Obama's reported call for a ban on U.S. imports of Chinese toys, China believes that a few defective products should not be the grounds for an overall ban.

-- China believes all sides will continue work within the framework of the Six-Party process regardless of political changes in South Korea.

-- VFM Wu Dawei has observed that disablement at the North Korean nuclear facility in Yongbyon is "proceeding smoothly" and China stresses the importance of the principle of "action-for-action."

-- China has "indisputable sovereignty" over the disputed islands and adjacent waterways of the South China Sea.

-- Chinese-Indian joint anti-terror military exercises are being held from December 19-27.

-- China is ready to strengthen cooperation on Burma with the EU and other parties and encourages ASEAN to play a larger role.

Product Safety

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¶2. Asked about U.S. Presidential candidate Barack Obama's reported call for a ban on U.S. imports of all Chinese toys, MFA Spokesperson Qin Gang said that the Chinese government attaches great importance to product safety, has introduced changes to its laws and regulations and has strengthened enforcement and industry supervision. In general, Qin said, Chinese products are reliable and safe, and if problems are found with a few products this should not be grounds for an overall ban. He added that, especially during the Christmas season, Chinese products can bring "happiness and joy" to American consumers.

Six-Party-Talks and South Korean Election

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¶3. Qin expressed China's congratulations to ROK President-elect Lee Myung-bak, adding that China is ready to work with the new government to promote the development of the "comprehensive cooperative partnership" between China and the ROK. China believes the DPRK and ROK will continue to work within the framework of the Six-Party process regardless of the change of government in South Korea. Qin said that China seeks peace, stability, development and good neighborly relations with North Korea, and also

seeks to maintain its partnership with the ROK. China, he stressed, adheres to its principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and hopes that dialogue will improve relations between North and South Korea.

VFM Wu Dawei Sees "Smooth" Progress on Disablement

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¶ 4. Qin reported that Vice Foreign Minister (VFM) Wu Dawei visited the DPRK December 17-19, where he met with the North Korean Foreign Minister and inspected disablement activities at the nuclear reactor at Yongbyon. Qin noted that during the visit the DPRK expressed willingness to fulfill "earnestly" its obligations under agreements reached in the Six-Party-Talks, including disablement. Qin said that disablement is "proceeding smoothly" and stressed the importance of the principle of "action-for-action" for a "balanced" completion of the disablement process.

¶ 5. Asked about progress on obtaining a declaration on North Korea's nuclear program, Qin said that such a declaration is called for in joint statements by the six parties, but requires further discussion by "the parties concerned." He expressed China's hope that all parties will "fulfill their respective roles" as described in the joint statements and said that the PRC continues close consultations with the six parties. He added that China remains prepared to honor its own commitments and continues to support the Six-Party process.

Incorporation of Disputed Islands into "Sansha City"

BEIJING 00007577 002 OF 002

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¶ 6. Asked about China's recent decision to incorporate the Spratly, Paracel and other South China Sea Islands into a new city called "Sansha," Qin asserted that China has "indisputable sovereignty" and effective jurisdiction over the islands of the South China Sea "and the adjacent waterways." Qin acknowledged Vietnam's disputing of the Chinese claim on the islands and pledged that China would continue consultations with Vietnam to avoid affecting relations with Vietnam and stability in the region.

Chinese-Indian Military Exercises

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¶ 7. Chinese-Indian joint anti-terror military exercises are being held from December 19-27, Qin said. The exercises aim at increasing the mutual trust and understanding between the two countries and their militaries. When pressed on the border dispute between the two countries, Qin said India and China share many common interests. He acknowledged some differences exist, but said this is "normal" and that even close allies such as the United States and Japan do not agree on every issue. Qin said that the two sides seek to resolve the boundary issue at "an early date." Qin also said that China and India are capable of resolving the issue themselves and have established the political guiding principles for a solution. Until the boundary issue is resolved, Qin said that China would maintain peace and stability in the disputed area and prevent the issue from becoming an obstacle to bilateral relations.

Burma

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¶ 8. Asked how China perceives its role in Burma, Qin said that stability there is not only a concern of

Burma, but also China, because of the two countries' common border. He stressed that China hopes for stability, democratization and reconciliation. However, he said, the people of Burma themselves will solve the issues in Burma through dialogue and consultation. China will respect the sovereignty of Burma and continue to play a constructive role in the resolution of the issues there. Qin said that China supports the efforts of UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari as well as a larger role for ASEAN. Qin added that China is also ready to strengthen cooperation with other parties, including the EU, to play a constructive and positive role in Burma.

Visits

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19. China and Japan are currently making arrangements for the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and will announce the details soon. Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca will call on Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi during his visit this week. Consultations are currently underway for a visit from British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, though a date has not yet been announced.

RANDT